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SUCCESS STORY

Small Tractors Lead to Surplus Crops

USAID's two-wheel tractors increase farm efficiency and create greater prosperity for Afghan farmers



Photo credit: IRD/AVIPA Plus

Shah Mohammed demonstrates his family's new two-wheel tractor. The tractor will enable Mohammed and his five brothers to cultivate an additional crop of winter wheat on their family's seven-acre plot.

This year, USAID's Afghanistan Vouchers for Increased Production in Afghanistan (AVIPA) Plus project will offer up to 6,000 two-wheel tractors to farmers in the west and north regions of Afghanistan.

Shah Mohammed, a wheat farmer in Kapisa Province, owns a seven-acre farm with his five brothers. Each year they grow two crops of wheat, beans, and vegetables – just enough to feed the 40 members of their extended family. They come from a long line of traditional farmers who have struggled with ox and plow on this same plot of ground. “We always farmed in the traditional way of our forefathers,” Mohammed said. “It was just enough for us to get by, but without a tractor we knew we’d never be able to get ahead.”

The tractors are ideal for small-landholding farmers like Mohammed who recently acquired one through a USAID subsidized project. In addition to using less fuel than their four-wheel counterparts, the tractors come with a full range of implements, such as a cultivator, grain drill, reaper, and trailer, making them useful for every step of the farming process. With training provided by USAID, local mechanics can repair them cheaply and easily. Additionally, with USAID absorbing 65 percent of the price, it is a tractor that farmers like Mohammed can afford.

Two-wheel tractors are bridging the gap between the age of oxen and the age of mechanized farm production. With quicker planting and harvesting and reduced harvest losses, the two-wheel tractor allows farmers to plant and harvest more crops per year. It makes seeding and harvesting easier and more accurate, increasing yields. It also allows farmers to switch to higher-value crops, which are more difficult to farm but bring a more lucrative return.

“Many of our neighbors farm enough to feed themselves, but not enough to sell and make a profit. Afghan agriculture needs to change. It’s time to replace the ox-drawn plow with the tractor,” said Mohammed.

With the tractor, Mohammed and his brothers are adding a third crop of winter wheat and expecting a record surplus. While their neighbors are still harvesting their crops from last season, the brothers have already tilled their soil and begun planting seed for winter wheat. Once finished, they plan to rent the tractor to their neighbors.